

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 3064

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OEXC, CZ

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON CZECH MINISTER OF CULTURE

USIA FOR IEU-P. ARNOLD AND W. LAWRENCE

SUMMARY: THE ATMOSPHERE WAS POSITIVE, THE MINISTER PROPOSES "ACTIVE BUT REALISTIC" EXPANSION OF CULTURAL RELATIONS, EXPRESSES CONCERN THAT A CZECHOSLOVAK CULTURAL CENTER IN NEW YORK MIGHT BE UNDERUTILIZED, AND COMMENTS ON DISSIDENT WRITERS. END SUMMARY.

1. AMBASSADOR BYRNE, ACCOMPANIED BY PAO QUINN, MADE INTRODUCTORY CALL ON CZECH MINISTER OF CULTURE MILAN KLUSAK OCTOBER 19. MINISTER SAID HE FORESAW "ACTIVE BUT REALISTIC" EXPANISON OF CULTURAL PROGRAMS BY BOTH COUNTRIES AS A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY IN THE IMMEDIATE YEARS AHEAD. HE STRESSED THE NEED ON GOC'S PART TO CAREFULLY PLAN ANY CULTURAL EVENTS AT LEAST ONE, AND GENERALLY TWO, YEARS IN ADVANCE. HE CITED THE UNFORTUNATE CASE OF AN AMERICAN COLLEGE CHOIR WHICH LAST YEAR SIMPLY SHOWED UP IN PRAGUE WITH NO ADVANCE COMMITMENT FOR A CONCERT, AND THEN WAS DISSAPOINTED WHEN IT COULD NOT BE ARRANGED.

2. AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED CURRENT STATUS OF EXCHANGE AGREEMENT TALKS WITH MINISTER, POINTING OUT THAT, WHILE MUCH PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE, REAL OBSTACLES REMAIN AS WELL. MINISTER SAID HE LOOKS FORWARD TO A "GOOD, PURPOSEFUL END OF NEGOTIATIONS,"
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ADDING, "I HOPE YOU HAVE NO DOUBT THAT WE DESIRE TO MOVE

AHEAD ON ALL FRONTS, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND CULTURAL."
THE MINISTER ALSO RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO A POINT MADE BY
THE AMBASSADOR, THAT CONGRESS MIGHT BE MORE RECEPTIVE TO
IMPROVING POLITICAL ASPECTS OF BILATERAL RELATIONS IF THERE
IS PROGRESS IN OTHER ASPECTS OF RELATIONS, SUCH AS IN CULTURAL
AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS.

3. AMBASSADOR RAISED QUESTION OF GOC WILLINGNESS TO RECEIVE
A LARGE AMERICAN EXHIBIT SOMETIME IN NEXT TWO YEARS, SHOULD
THERE BE THE POSSIBILITY OF OFFERING ONE, WHICH WE COULD NOT
SAY AT PRESENT. MINISTER SAID THAT AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION
TO PLASTIC AND VISUAL ARTS IS WELL-KNOWN AND RESPECTED AMONG
CZECHOSLOVAK ARTISTS, AND THIS MIGHT BE A POSSIBILITY. HE
MADE NO COMMITMENT, OR DIRECTLY ENCOURAGING SIGN, BUT HE DID
NOT SAY "NO" EITHER, WHICH HAS USUALLY BEEN THE CASE
AT THE CULTURAL MINISTRY IN RECENT YEARS.

4. AMBASSADOR RAISED QUESTION OF CULTURAL CENTERS, POINTING
OUT THIS WAS A NORMAL AND USUAL PART OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.
MINISTER REPLIED, "FOR YOU IT WOULD BE EASY," AND THAT US
WOULD HAVE A RECEPTIVE PUBLIC FOR SUCH A CENTER IN PRAGUE.
HOWEVER, HE EXPRESSED SERIOUS CONCERN ABOUT WHAT GOC COULD
DO FOR ITS PART IN US. HE SAID, "THE IDEA IS WORTH CONSIDERING,"
BUT "ON FIRST GLANCE" THE QUESTION OF CENTERS SHOULD
FOLLOW DEVELOPMENT OF A MORE VIGOROUS AND DIVERSE SET OF
CULTURAL ACTIVITIES THAN PRESENTLY EXIST BETWEEN US-GOC.
KLUSAK ALSO VOICE CONCERN THAT GOC RENT AN EXPENSIVE LOCATION
IN "A CITY LIKE NEW YORK AND HAVE THREE OR FOUR PEOPLE SITTING
AROUND DOING NOTHING. WE HAVE TO HAVE ACTIVITY FOR THEM."

5. MINISTER SAID THERE WAS AN IMBALANCE BETWEEN NUMBER OF WESTERN
BOOKS TRANSLATED INTO CZECH AND SLOVAK EACH YEAR AND VICE VERSA.
SAID THA, EXCEPT FOR A FEW CLASSICAL WORKS, "VERY LITTLE"
CZECH WORK HAS BEEN TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH,
ESPECIALLY FOR MORE RECENT TIMES. SUGGESTION BY PAO OF A
MEETING OF PUBLICATIONS-EDITORIAL-TRANSLATION PROFESSIONALS
ON BOTH SIDES TO EXPLORE ISSUE, SUCH AS PERIODICALLY
TAKES PLACE BETWEEN US AND USSR WAS GREETED WITH MILD SHOW
OF INTEREST.

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6. AMBASSADOR RAISED "IN A FRIENDLY WAY" QUESTION OF GOC
POLICY ON ALLOWING ARTISTIC PERSONALITIES TO VISIT THE
WEST, CITING RECENT CASE OF AUTHOR PAVEL KOHOUT, WHO HAS
A PLAY OPENING ON BROADWAY THIS MONTH, BUT WHO HAS NO EXIT
PERMIT. MINISTER SAID THAT WHENEVER AMBASSADOR HAD "ANY
SUCH DELICATE DIPLOMATIC QUESTION" HE SHOULD RAISE IT,
BECAUSE HE COULD EXPECT A "FRANK AND DIRECT REPLY." HE SAID
THAT GOC WOULD NOT SEND KOHOUT AND "ONE, TWO, OR

THREE OTHERS LIKE THAT WHO CONTINUE THE LINE OF BEHAVIOR THEY DO AS OFFICIAL REPRESENTATIVES OF GOC." PAO POINTED OUT KOHOUT INVITATION WAS FROM PLAY'S PRODUCER, WHO WOULD COVER HIS EXPENSES. MINISTER SAID THAT KOHOUT HAD TRAVELED TO WEST GERMANY RECENTLY AND "THAT HE IS FREE TO APPLY FOR A PASSPORT LIKE ANY OTHER CZECHOSLOVAK CITIZEN." HE IMPLIED IT WOULD NOT BE A QUESTION CULTURAL MINISTRY WOULD DECIDE.

7. AMBASSADOR RAISED QUESTION OF WHAT SORTS OF MATERIAL MINISTRY OF CULTURE MIGHT ASSEMBLE FOR GOC PRESENTATION AT BELGRADE CONFERENCE ON CSCE FOLLOWUP NEXT YEAR. IT CAUGHT THE MINISTER FLAT-FOOTED. HE BEGAN TO RAMBLE, AND, AS HE LIKED THE SOUND OF CERTAIN PHRASES, REPEATED THEM WITH RENEWED VIGOR. HE SAID GOC WOULD PROBABLY PRESENT A TABULATION OF WHAT IT IS DOING IN INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL COOPERATION, POINTING TO THE SEVERAL EXCHANGE AGREEMENTS IT IS NEGOTIATING IN THE POST-HELSINKI PERIOD, AND THAT IT LOOKS FOR A "MORE ACTIVE, DYNAMIC, DEEPENING CULTURAL RELATIONSHIP" WITH SEVERAL COUNTRIES AS A PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE HELSINKI ACCORDS. HE SEES HELSINKI AS A WAY OF "PERMANENTLY ENCOURAGING" INCREASED CULTURAL COOPERATION.

COMMENT: KLUSAK CHOSE TO SPEAK IN ENGLISH, WHICH AUTOMATICALLY REDUCED THE POSSIBILITIES FOR A CLEAR EXCHANGE OF IDEAS BY MORE THAN FIFTY PERCENT RIGHT FROM THE START. HE ALSO HAD AN UNFORTUNATE HABIT OF STRINGING HIS THOUGHTS ALONG IN ASSOCIATIVE PHRASES, EMPHASIZING A POINT WITH A ROLL OF HIS EYES OR A GESTURE OF THE HAND, WHEN A MORE PRECISE STATEMENT WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE USEFUL. HIS MANNER WAS VIGOROUS, HE EMPHASIZED THE PRACTICAL AND REALISTIC, AND SEEMED GENUINELY INTERESTED IN MOVING AHEAD ON QUESTIONS OF CULTURAL COOPERATION. THERE WAS NO AREA WHERE HE WAS CATEGORICALLY NEGATIVE. OF ALL THE HIGH GOC OFFICIALS

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WITH WHICH THE EMBASSY HAS DISCUSSED THE MATTER, HE WAS PERHAPS THE QUICKEST TO GRASP THE POINT THAT, IF THE GOC WANTS TO IMPROVE ITS POLITICAL STANDING WITH THE AMERICAN CONGRESS, IT MUST DO SO BY FIRST IMPROVING ITS CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES. BYRNE

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